

## TRANSPORTATION

### INTRODUCTION

The Transportation Element of the North Beach Comprehensive Plan includes the classification of the streets, characteristics of all modes of transportation that exists in town, discussion relative to the issues involving movement in the community, and goals, policies, and implementation strategies to accomplish expanded and efficient multi-modal transportation. This chapter is part of a policy document rather than a particular transportation plan so there will be no specific projects or changes in traffic movement that are mandated in this Plan. It will discuss various options of movement throughout the community: automobile, public bus transit, bicycle, and pedestrian. It will, also, address the major roadways that connect North Beach to other counties and regions of the State and will include transportation goals and policies from the latest adopted Calvert County Comprehensive Plan. You will find discussions of land use and transportation relationships; public transit issues, neighborhood impacts, and objectives and policies that will foster less reliance on the automobile and more opportunities for bicycles and walking.

Major automobile access to North Beach is via Route 261 from the north and south with limited access from Fifth Street extended. Route 261 connects to Md. Routes 2 and 260 that ultimately connect to Md. Route 4 and 495, and Interstate 95. In the 2004 Calvert County Comprehensive Plan, trends presented indicated that traffic volumes on Routes 2 and 4 have more than doubled in recent decades. This impacts North Beach since many of the residents of the Town commute to work using these routes. The County Plan recognizes Md. Routes 260, 2, and 4 as fast heavily traveled roads and it states that the gradual conversion of Md. Routes 2 and 4 into controlled access expressways will be the key to future traffic congestion. Improvements, such as these, funded by the County and State will improve the transportation network into the region from North Beach.

All streets in North Beach are owned and maintained by the Town except Chesapeake Avenue which is the responsibility of the State since it is a link of Maryland Route 261. Adequate transportation arterials and access to the beach and commercial areas are important to the successful revitalization of North Beach. Traffic circulation and parking for vehicles and bicycle and pedestrian alternatives must meet the needs of the residents, tourists, business patrons, and employees.

In order to better understand the Transportation network and issues in North Beach, it was necessary to review the Transportation Element of the previous Comprehensive Plan which identified six major issues that are listed below.

- 1) Street directions and one-way rerouting are needed to improve circulation and access along the waterfront.
- 2) Several parts of the Town pose significant risk to pedestrians given narrow road widths, the absence of sidewalks, and vehicular traffic.
- 3) Sidewalks in many areas are in poor condition or do not exist.
- 4) Bicycles provide an alternative means of transportation to move around Town and among recreational areas. It is not desirable for bicycles to use the boardwalk at the same time as pedestrians, thus, a means of enjoying the Town by bicycle should be identified.
- 5) Parallel on-street parking is permitted on most streets in the Town. Off-street parking is usually on private land and is unpaved. The poor condition of the sidewalks and curbs and the lack of designated off-street parking is an invitation to park on the sidewalks or on private

property. The parking situation can only become worse as revitalization of the beach and commercial area occurs unless off-street parking improvements are made.

- 6) Public transportation is an important component of town living; it is the only means of transportation for some residents of Town. Additional public transportation opportunities would be useful for commuters, the older population, and for special summer time events.

Since the time of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, there has been some one way directional changes to the street pattern; however, there is currently a Parking Study being conducted that may provide recommendations for traffic circulation based on the location of major parking areas and the most favorable flow to access those areas. There are still a number of streets that have no sidewalks or have sidewalks that are obstructed for handicap accessibility vehicles or are in need of repair. These issues may be able to be addressed once the Parking Study is finished and implemented which may allow for sidewalks to replace the need for on street parking. In addition, there are a number of paper alleys in Town that could be converted into alley ways that would allow parking behind residents instead of on the street. A bicycle path system should be studied and implemented within the Town to reduce the dependence on short vehicular trips.

### Street Classification

Street classification maps are adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan as are the goals, policies, and implementation strategies. Except for Maryland Route 261, North Beach's Transportation map will show Local streets; however, it should show streets that are considered constrained due to a narrow right-of-way and buildings that are close to the street that make widening the street economically unfeasible. Although most of the rights-of-way are approximately fifty feet, some of the streets could provide additional carrying capacity if rights-of-way could be expanded. Proposed street rights-of-way should be described and standard details should be determined for normal and constrained streets and the sidewalks that are either existing or planned.

This analysis should be done to determine the feasibility of bicycle paths being constructed through the Town. Balancing pedestrian and vehicular traffic policies to determine the optimal balance is needed before construction should take place for any options.

### Shared Use Paths

Replacing vehicular trips with non-motorized bicycles or with walking yields significant environmental benefits and promotes a greater sense of community. Planning bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways generally requires a fair amount of planning; may require acquisition of land and needs the support and commitment of public officials. Some communities elect to establish a bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee that would study and recommend efficient and safe routes to the elected officials and then provide construction plans for this public improvement. A comprehensive effort of establishing bicycle and pedestrian routes throughout the town will require a bicycle and pedestrian path plan(hereafter referred to as a shared use path) with routes and support of the Mayor and Council, Planning Commission, Public Works Department, and the residents. Connection to adjacent communities and jurisdictions would be beneficial in planning this mode of transportation. Shared use paths on the public street should be incorporated into the standard details or specifications of the street and traffic calming may need to be added to insure safety of riders or pedestrians. A shared path system is preferred over a separate bicycle path and pedestrian path due to the limited space that is available in an already built environment.

## Traffic Calming

Traffic calming utilizes a wide range of methods that diverts traffic or slows down motor vehicles which provides more safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. It is generally used in areas where there are a number of pedestrians on the street and a number of vehicles: some of which can be through traffic as we would see on Chesapeake Avenue or Fifth Street; or, in congested areas: like Bay Avenue, especially during special events. It is often requested by citizens when they hope to mitigate the impacts of speeding vehicular traffic through their neighborhoods.

Each situation where you may be utilizing traffic calming measures needs to be studied and applied properly to the specific situation for which it is intended to achieve positive results. A common traffic calming device could be as simple as a stop sign placed in an appropriate location to allow pedestrians to cross the street or to slow down speed in residential neighborhoods. Speed humps or tables are, also, used to slow traffic and discourages through traffic from using residential streets. When determining use of traffic calming devices, a qualified engineer and emergency personnel should be consulted to evaluate the application and a cost benefit analysis for the improvement to be considered. Improvement costs could be a funded by a developer if the project is creating an impact at an otherwise safe location that may become unsafe with the impact of the construction of new development.

## Public Transit

As stated in the Economic element, many residents of the Town commute out of Town, and in some cases out of the County each day to reach their places of employment. Those who do not drive or car pool, rely on County Bus Service or the Maryland Transit Administration bus to ride to work. The County operates a fixed route service between town centers and a demand-responsive service which provides transportation for the elderly.

During the summer months, the Beach Trolley provides service between Deale, Chesapeake Beach, Harrington Harbor, and North Beach which is used by tourists and residents. There are plans to add an additional trolley to shorten the wait time between trips and to service more patrons.

## Parking

A parking study was completed for the Town by Desman Associates in June 2009. The parking study identified the existing parking inventory as consisting of two publicly available surface lots, private/restricted parking lots for apartment residents and on street parking meters of two hour and 30 minute duration. There are 731 off street parking spaces of which 466 are dedicated to private/restricted users. Approximately 66 percent of non-restricted on street parking inventory (848 out of 1,284) are west of Chesapeake Avenue. Residential and two hour parking account for 15 percent of the total on street inventory.

The study identified an existing deficit of seventy-two parking spaces during peak weekend mid-day use for beach patrons and a future deficit of 252 spaces for beach goers and a deficit of 166 spaces for boardwalk patrons. It is anticipated the parking space deficit can be mitigated with increased on street parking even though the anticipated walkway distances may be exceeded. The study does not suggest the need for additional off street parking lots or structures.

Developers are recommended to provide for off street parking needs or pay a fee in lieu of providing parking as long as the money is used for implementing parking improvements such as striping, curbs, sidewalks, residential alleyways for rear yard access and parking and regulatory signs.

The study further suggests establishing a residential parking program in all residential areas with a fee required for each vehicle dependent on street parking which would be used to fund improvements and the cost for enforcement and administration. Visitor, landlord, and tenant parking permits would be issued. Existing on street parking spaces would be converted to pay-by-space cluster meters. Increased enforcement and establishment of a parking enterprise fund is further suggested as a means to control revenue and expenses.

Recently, the concept of back in parking as an alternative to front in parking has been suggested to improve safety. Back in parking for spaces on Bay Avenue may improve safety by blocking immediate access to the street by child passengers and providing better visibility while reentering the street when leaving the parked position.

## TRANSPORTATION GOALS

1. Develop a balanced, efficient, and equitable transportation system that provides a range of transportation options that reinforces the livability and sustainable neighborhoods in Town.
2. The transportation system should support a strong and diverse economy and provide parking areas for those shops and services in Town.
3. Minimize the number of low occupant vehicular trips and support public transportation.
4. Support and seek funding for bicycle and pedestrian shared use paths as a component of the recreational activities planned for the Town.
5. Provide traffic calming on streets that are considered unsafe due to lack of sidewalks or vehicular speed.

## POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

**Policy T.1: Coordinate with state and federal agencies, local governments, and providers of transportation services when planning and funding transportation links and services.**

### Implementation Strategies

1. Coordinate funding and development of transportation projects with public and private investment and in combination with other jurisdictions, if possible.
2. Support adding a second trolley to provide transportation for citizens and tourists.
3. Provide bus shelters at stops for public transportation.
4. Explore and identify revenue sources from parking to fund new parking facilities.
5. Explore shared parking when two businesses operate at the different times.

**Policy T.2: Provide adequate parking for the citizens, businesses, and visitors.**

### Implementation Strategies

1. Design and construct well lighted and safe parking areas that are compatible with adjacent residential areas.
2. Provide handicap accessible parking areas and bicycle parking.
3. Encourage bioretention areas for storm water management and pervious paving in parking areas when at all possible.
4. Establish a parking enterprise fund.
5. Install pay-by-space meters.
6. Establish a residential parking program and permits.
7. Require developers to provide an equitable amount of off street parking or pay a fee in lieu of parking.
8. Improve on street parking with striping, curb, sidewalks, residential alleyways, and regulatory signage.
9. Improve enforcement of parking utilization.

#### **Policy T.3: Educate Citizens on the Transportation Goals, Policies, and Implementation Strategies.**

### Implementation Strategies

1. Increase public awareness of the benefits of walking and bicycling and of resources and facilities when they become available.
2. Educate citizens and businesses about Green Streets and encourage citizen support to build them to enhance and improve the livability of the Town and their neighborhoods.
3. Encourage citizen support to continue increasing multi modal transportation options in the future.

#### **Policy T.4: Provide Street classification designations and descriptions in the Town's Standard Details and Specifications. Describe streets, confined streets, bicycle pedestrians paths and other transportation related improvements.**

### Implementation Strategies

1. Provide standard details and specifications for all types of motor vehicles, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian, for each street classification. Include sidewalks, street lights, and street trees that are in conformance with this Plan.

#### **Policy T.5: Support a bicycle and pedestrian path.**

### Implementation Strategies

1. Make development of a shared path plan a Town effort; establish a mechanism to ensure coordination.
2. Develop a bicycle and pedestrian program that focuses on safe, direct routes that serve all neighborhoods. Prioritize development of routes based on potential usage and construct needed facilities as funding allows.
3. Promote bicycling and walking and encourage safe travel habits.
4. Encourage other communities to plan to connect to the Town's bike routes. Safe and convenient bicycle parking should be provided along routes and near shopping and services.

**Policy T.6: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to include the option of traffic calming devices and add selected measures to the Town's Standard Details and Specifications.**

**Implementation Strategies**

1. Consider traffic calming measures in areas where there are safety issues or hazards due to vehicular/pedestrian conflicts and consult the proper authority before making decisions.

**Policy T.7: Support Public Transit.**

**Implementation Strategies**

1. Make transit schedules available to the public and tourists.
2. Support transit services and encourage and participate in rider ship.